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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN HUMAN TRAFFICKING INTERIM ASSESSMENT

REF: SECSTATE 114330

¶1. (SBU) Summary. This cable responds to ref A request for an interim assessment of Pakistan's progress in combating trafficking in persons (TIP). In response to Pakistan's Tier 2 Watch List ranking in the 2009 TIP report, the government enhanced its efforts to address Pakistan's significant human trafficking problems, including bonded and forced labor. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) also provided new data to us on anti-TIP activities. Per the TIP Report's recommendation that Pakistan increase labor trafficking law enforcement activity, post obtained statistics that indicate increased bonded labor releases over previous years. With respect to the recommendation that Pakistan increase activity against fraudulent labor recruiting, the government reported that it has expanded services in overseas FIA offices and that the Bureau of Immigration now maintains a database of labor recruiters. Regarding the recommendation to increase law enforcement activity against government complicity in trafficking, the government did not have mid-year data available on this issue, but promised to provide such data at year's end. In response to the recommendation calling for expanded victim protection services, the government initiated a formal evaluation of the extent of existing services and began providing services overseas to trafficking victims. Given the government's response to the deficiencies highlighted in the TIP Report, Post assesses that Pakistan has made progress, but continues to need significant assistance in building anti-TIP capacity. End Summary.

PAKISTANI RESPONSE TO TIER 2 WATCHLIST RANKING

¶2. (SBU) The Federal Investigative Agency (FIA), mandated to be the national rapporteur for anti-trafficking efforts, responded proactively to the TIP Tier 2 Watchlist ranking, despite an increasingly unstable political and security climate, including two suicide bombs in 2009 on FIA facilities. Immediately following the TIP Report release, FIA Director General Tariq Khosa and Additional Director General of Immigration Iftikhar Ahmed informed federal and provincial labor, education and health ministries, provincial chief secretaries, and provincial inspectors general of police of the report's findings and recommendations, and requested data on anti-trafficking efforts. Demonstrating political will to combat trafficking, the FIA established bimonthly meetings with the Embassy, hired a new staff member, and created a time line and plan to address the complexities of Pakistan's

internal trafficking problems. With a specific focus on bonded and forced labor, the resource-strapped agency also established bimonthly meetings with local and international NGOs to enhance collaboration on anti-trafficking activities, and formed three FIA-civil society committees to address public awareness, law enforcement training needs, and victim protection services.

¶3. (SBU) Pakistani officials provided us new information on ongoing anti-trafficking projects, and explained legal gaps in Pakistan's bonded labor legislation and the sections of the Pakistani Penal Code under which bonded and forced labor complaints may be filed. According to the FIA, the Punjab Labour Ministry, the Punjab Child Protection Bureau, the Sindh provincial government, and the Employers Federation of Pakistan are currently implementing programs that aim to eliminate bonded and forced child labor through land redistribution efforts, industrial sector reform, and education projects. The FIA also said that while almost no cases have been filed under the 1992 Bonded Labor Abolition Act (BLLA) as a result of technical flaws in the legislation, criminal and civil charges for bonded and forced labor violations are, in fact, filed under other sections of the penal code. (Note: The International Labor Organization, provincial labor ministries, and NGOs are working together on a draft BLLA amendment which would fix the BLLA's legal defects. End Note.) While the government was not previously able to provide us with statistics on bonded and forced labor cases charged under these other sections of the penal code, post will work with its government contacts on trying to obtain such information for the 2010 TIP Report.

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GOP ACTION ON TIP RECOMMENDATIONS

¶4. (SBU) The 2009 TIP Report's first recommendation to address Pakistani's purported deficiencies combating trafficking calls for the government to increase law enforcement activity against perpetrators of bonded labor and forced child labor. The report noted that Pakistan did not provide 2008 data to demonstrate any significant law enforcement efforts against labor trafficking. However, in response to the TIP Report, the FIA went to great lengths to try to obtain such data for the Embassy, even though this data is not readily available to the FIA because it is maintained at the provincial and local levels. Drawing on their own personal relationships with local police, FIA officials obtained for us 2006-09 statistics of bonded laborer releases by police in four districts of Sindh province with high bonded labor incidence. According this data, bonded labor releases increased by between 140% and 200% in the four districts over that four year period. District police superintendents attribute these increases to greater media and public awareness of labor rights. Consulate Lahore managed to obtain Punjab data for 2008 and 2009 that details case registrations and convictions of forced and bonded labor offenses under 12 sections of the Pakistani Penal Code. The data, which is incomplete, indicates a 10% increase in cases registered for forced or bonded labor related offenses in Punjab province from 2008 to ¶2009.

¶5. (SBU) In response to the second TIP Report recommendation for increased law enforcement activity against fraudulent labor recruiting, the Pakistani government has made significant progress by expanding services overseas in its Muscat, Oman FIA office and by closely monitoring recruiters through the Bureau of Immigration. In June, FIA officers in Muscat rescued two young girls, one 14 years of age, brought to Oman by a Karachi-based agent who advertised legitimate work, but then attempted to sell them into the sex trade. FIA repatriated both girls and initiated a criminal case against the trafficker. FIA is awaiting budgetary approval

to open additional offices in Turkey and Greece to augment efforts against fraudulent recruiting and other forms of trafficking. Additionally, Umer Moriya, Director General of the Bureau of Immigration, reported to us in a November 3 meeting that his offices are charged with close monitoring of all formal recruiting for overseas labor and revoke licenses when recruiters abuse the process. The Bureau revoked one license to date in 2009. The Bureau conducts security and financial investigations before issuing operating licenses to recruiters, and maintains a database of more than 1,300 recruiters, 150 of whom were licensed in 2009. It also tracks recruitment fees and places special exit stamps in passports for Pakistani departing the country for work obtained through recruiters, providing a mechanism for documenting such Pakistani workers overseas.

¶16. (SBU) The third recommendation calls for more law enforcement activity against government complicity in human trafficking. FIA confirmed that it continues to punish government officials who participate in human trafficking. The agency was unable to provide mid-year data, but will provide data for the final TIP Report.

¶17. (SBU) The fourth TIP Report recommendation identifies the need for expanded forced labor and sex trafficking victim protection services. In direct response to this recommendation, FIA initiated a project in October with NGOs to develop a national victim protection services database. They have thus far identified 276 women's centers, 53 drop-in centers and 47 shelters. Additionally, officials in Sindh confirmed to us that the government and NGOs are operating several camps for released bonded labors. In both Punjab and Sindh, NGOs are also providing shelter, food and vocational training to released bonded labors. Lastly, FIA has begun to provide medical and psychological services to trafficking victims via its Muscat offices and hopes to expand these services to offices in Turkey and Greece.

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¶18. (SBU) Comment: Pakistani government institutions, including the FIA, took the TIP Report and Pakistan's Tier 2 Watch List ranking very seriously, and are taking steps to implement the recommendations, despite the difficulties in doing so at a time when Pakistan is experiencing frequent terrorist attacks, many aimed at law enforcement, and when the country's law enforcement efforts must necessarily be focused on the counter-terrorism fight. The difficulty surrounding the collection and sharing of law enforcement data in Pakistan, largely a result of a decentralization of law enforcement functions and a lack of data management technology at local levels, impedes accurate reporting on the country's anti-TIP efforts.

¶19. (SBU) Comment Continued: To better combat bonded and forced labor, Pakistan needs more economic development programs that target the informal labor sectors in Punjab and Sindh and incorporate labor rights and skills- development training. There is also great need for financial assistance for organizations that provide legal and welfare assistance to victims of labor trafficking. End Comment.

PATTERSON